NOTES FOR REMARKS BY

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A few days ago a number of distinguished Canadians gathered in Vancouver to pay homage to an outstanding Canadian - Frank Scott, lawyer, scholar, poet, human being - and his remarkable contributions over a period of 80 years.

Frank Scott's life has been an extraordinary one in its humanism and in its accomplishments, but not necessarily in its length. Octagenerians are plentiful in Canada, and are increasing in number. Average life expectancy of new-born Canadians is now 78 years for women and 75 years for men. And in the post-Darwinian age, what an incredible galaxy of accomplishment, of tragedy, of uncertainty rushes past in a single lifespan. In Frank Scott's lifetime the world has witnessed the transport age, the atomic age and the space age. Mass communication and mass consumption. Electro-cardiography, cellophane, radio-telescopes, antibiotics, colour photography, nylon, computers, re-combinant DNA. World wars and regional wars and local wars. The end of colonialism; the beginning of television. Oral contraceptives, political terrorism, environmental degradation, nuclear proliferation.

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Proliferation, too, of international institutions and the birth of alphabet agencies. Acronyms have become part of our vocabulary. As a lawyer, I was introduced early in law school to this kind of shorthand. SCRs, UTLJ and LRQB roll off the lips of a first year law student as readily as if he had typewriter keys implanted in his brain. International lawyers leap still further - BYIL, ICJ (and, just to confuse outsiders, IJC also). And because they work with international political bodies, the range is immense: ILO, FAO, UNDP, ECLA and OECD. Confusion is compounded when names cease to be initials and begin to be pronounced: UNCTAD, UNITAR, IMCO, NATO, and WIPO.

Bolstered by my legal background, and with years of foreign experience in External Affairs (EXTAFF) and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), I felt that I was as familiar as anyone in Canada with the intricacies of the acronym jungle. Hadn't I participated at CSCE? Hadn't I been part of CHOGM (an unnecessarily long acronym, designed to avoid the danger replete in the simpler HOG). CIEC, IMF, MBFR and SLBMs were all old hat to me.

Then I moved to IDRC and have since been under seige from all directions. The acronyms are extraordinarily exotic. SEARCA (South East Asian Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture), IFPRI (the International Food Policy Research Institute), APLIC (the Association of Population and Family Planning Libraries and Information Centres). There's the BID and the BAD, the OAS and the OAU.

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And because we work in three languages at the Centre, most of these - and the hundreds of others printed in the 162 page development acronym dictionary prepared by the Centre - must be recognized as well in each of French and Spanish. My favourite is FEPAFEM (Federacion Panamericana de Asociaciones de Facultades de Medecina) but I find inspiration in le Centre de recherches et d'information socio-politiques. Its acronym, as you have calculated, is CRISP.

Acronyms by themselves contribute nothing to society or to social processes, apart perhaps from a tantalizing new exercise in alphabet skills. Nor, of course, do the institutions and activities those acronyms represent necessarily make a contribution. Contributions come from the principles for which they stand, the goals which they pursue, and the vigour with which they function.

A number of those institutions engage, and necessarily, in the food sector. A sector we in this country regard with such general indifference. This, notwithstanding that agriculture represents some 28% of Canada's GDP and that the most basic need of mankind is and always has been food, that the initial step taken by human beings to create civilization 12 millenia ago was intimately connected with agriculture.

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Man stopped wandering and began to settle because of what Bronowski terms "the biological revolution": the retreat of the polar ice cap and the consequent ability of mankind to take charge of his environment at the level of living things - plants and animals - by cultivation and domestication. One of the places where human and natural events first brought about agriculture was the plain of Jericho. Ten thousand years ago, wheat was not the plant we know today, but only one of many wild grasses. By some genetic accident it crossed with a natural goat grass to form a fertile hybrid, combining the fourteen chromosomes of each to produce a new strain with twenty-eight chromosomes. Another genetic accident then occurred when this strain, called Emmer, crossed with another natural grass to produce a new hybrid of forty-two chromosomes, and this is bread wheat. Yet even stranger than the mutation is the fact that this wheat cannot self-propagate because the ear is too tight to break up, and the grains are too heavy to fly in the wind.

In Bronowski's words, "Suddenly, man and the plant have come together. Man has a wheat that he lives by, but the wheat also thinks that man was made for it because only so can it be propagated. The bread wheats can only multiply with help; man must harvest the ears and scatter the seeds; the life of each, man and the plant, depends on the other. It is a true fairy tale of genetics..."

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In the intervening thousands of years, this and other fairy tales have been pursued by countless generations of farmers world-wide. Extraordinary advances have been made. An immense body of knowledge has been accumulated concerning plant breeding, soil science, cropping techniques, irrigation and harvesting systems, and more. Yet notwithstanding this scientific experience and this wealth of practical know-how, hundreds of millions of persons subsist today on inadequate nourishment. That fact is an explosive international issue.

In low-income countries, agriculture typically employs half to two-thirds of the population, produces on the order of half the gross national product, provides well over one-third the consumption goods (much more of course for the poor) and is geographically pervasive. Agriculture is the dominant force shaping poverty, development strategy and the composition of political constituencies. From that dominance its importance to international relations follows.

Agricultural productivity is, of course, only one facet of food security but it is a critical ingredient in the whole. Increases in production there must be, but these must be accompanied by distribution and consumption patterns and techniques which will ensure that the food reaches those in need of it. Adequate economic

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incentives are often a missing needed element in the mix. Yet farmers in the developing countries, no more than those in Canada, will grow crops for commercial sale if market prices are not adequate to pay their expenses and provide a reasonable profit.

There are other constraints. The area of arable land in the world is by and large now all dedicated to cultivation. Increased yields in the future will come from a science-based, not a land based agriculture. New technologies, irrigation, application of fertilizers and pesticides, new higher-yielding strains, and the like. All requiring such scarce elements in the developing world as capital, credit and specialized skills. Without those elements, and the introduction of the policies necessary to change consumption patterns, widespread malnutrition will grow ever more common.

Yet even in the absence of those new, positive elements, the current situation will deteriorate. Increasing population is one reason. Continuing refugee pressures is another. And still another, particularly frightening, reason is the removal from food cultivation of prime agricultural land. In Canada this has been happening at an alarming rate. According to my colleague Joe Hulse, 450 square kilometres of prime Ontario farmland have been turned to other purposes - primarily industrial and commercial - since 1970. That amount of land, reckons Mr. Hulse, could produce each year 1.5 million tons of

apples, or 800,000 tons of peaches, or 300,000 tons of corn. Now it produces nothing and is a major contributing factor to Canada's slide, over a thirty year period, from a rough self-sufficiency in fruit and vegetables to our present state of importing 60 per cent of our fruit and 37 per cent of our vegetables.

An additional 5-7 million hectares (12½ to 17½ million acres) worldwide are being lost to agriculture every year through soil deterioration and erosion.

Still another source of pressure on food crops is the foreign exchange imbalance faced by so many countries as oil prices rise. Renewable forms of energy are sought, one of which is the cultivation of fuel crops. Large scale production of agricultural commodities for the purpose of manufacturing liquid fuel - ethanol as a substitute for gasoline - is a recent, and growing, phenomenon. In this quest for locally sourced fuel, marginal lands are sometimes brought into production; but sometimes prime land dedicated to food crops is diverted to sugarcane or cereals destined to be converted into ethanol.

In the United States there has been set an official production goal of ten billion gallons of ethanol by 1990. Should this target be met, it will not only reduce the exportable surplus of grain, on which the world sorely depends, it will have the unavoidable effect of driving up

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domestic food prices. And the higher that oil prices climb, the higher will food prices rise because the market will determine the farmer's choice of crop. Should the 1990 goal be reached, the Brookings Institute Bulletin calculates that the net loss to the United States food system would be 67 million tons per year - about 1/4 of total U.S. grain production, but more significant, 1/2 of all grain fed to livestock in the United States.

A diversion of those proportions in the United States, and increasing ethanol programs elsewhere, raise frightening questions about future food security. FAO statistics reveal that in 1980 total world cereal production was down 9 million tons from 1979, while in the same period the world population grew by 80 million. 1980 was the second year in a row that the world ate more grain than it produced. This year FAO warns that a very good harvest is necessary to meet worldwide demand; an all-time record harvest is required if food stocks are to be built back to safe levels.

These, then, are food facts of life:

- more than 500 million people suffer from severe under-nutrition.

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- millions of children die each year from hunger-related illness and disease; millions more suffer stunted physical and mental development.
- more than 100 countries, most of them in the developing world, are in "food-deficit" (consuming more food than they produce).

Those facts, and all the others I have related, affect directly every Canadian. Food shortages and crop failures anywhere in the world drive up the price of food here. Soil degradation from water and wind erosion, salinization, and tropical forest elimination affect as well our climate. The destruction of the world's forest, largely by persons in quest of cooking fuel, is taking place on a massive scale. According to the Brandt Commission, at the rate of 11 million hectares a year - an area equal to one half of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland combined. If that rate continues, the world's stock of wood will be halved by the year 2000, with incalculable effects on the carbon dioxide balance in the atmosphere and undoubted wide-ranging changes in weather, particularly rainfall, patterns. With consequent effects on Canadian agriculture.

The United States "Global 2000" Report is equally as sombre as Brandt. The message of that report, according to one of its authors, is "clear, unequivocal, and unavoidable. That message is, if present trends continue, the world in the year 2000 will be more crowded, more polluted,

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less stable ecologically, and more vulnerable to economic, social and environmental disruption than the world we live in at present." What does "more crowded" mean? An average of one new Bangladesh every year for the next 20 years.

Quite clearly, the overall health and vitality of the developing world is central to Canadian economic and security interests. This is one reason why IDRC among others pays the attention it does to the strengthening in the developing countries of agricultural research, the health sciences, and a better understanding of the social dimension of development. It is in Canada's interest we do so. None of us should be so short-sighted as to assume that north-south relations are played according to the rules of a zero-sum game in which each point gained by one participant is a point lost to the other. In fact evidence now reveals that development is a mutually beneficial operation in which all win, or in default of which all lose.

We in Canada live in very privileged circumstances, and in the result, argue and cavil over very selfish issues. It is difficult if not impossible for us to relate to starvation and malnourishment and endemic poverty. We tend, as is natural, to push into the future these images and to delay our response to them. Albert Camus had an answer for that. In his novel "The Fall", he wrote: "Don't wait for the Last Judgment. It takes place every day."

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Indeed it is taking place every day for untold numbers of persons in developing countries, a large proportion of them infants and young children. That knowledge is shared by them, by us, and by our common Creator. Added to it must be the knowledge that our failure to contribute to the remedy cannot any longer adequately be explained either economically or morally.

IDRC last October marked its 10th anniversary. Ten years of effort and accomplishment which have proven that the Centre, Canadian in origin and in financial support, but international in attitude, in structure, and in operation, is a needed and effective organization. To mark that anniversary, the Centre sponsored a series of public lectures on the theme "The Third World: Must it Always be Third?" The opening lecture was delivered by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Honourable Shridath Ramphal. He drew on his experience as a member of the Brandt Commission and quoted from its report:

> "At the beginnings of the 1980s the world community faces much greater dangers than at any time since the Second World War."

Mr. Ramphal then went on to say that "the trouble is that while our senses tell us that the world has changed; that interdependence is reality, not myth or slogan; that none any longer can go it alone;

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that the era of adversary power politics is passing and the era of negotiation and global compact has begun; that only in co-management of the world economy for the benefit of all can lie salvation for any; while in north and south we know this, yet with some masochistic compulsion we defer consensus on change and deepen the peril that the status quo threatens for all."

1981 may be for many years to come the last real chance to come to grips with these issues, for this is the year of Global Negotiations at the U.N., this is the year of a series of important summit conferences, culminating with a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Melbourne in the fall. The opportunity can easily be missed, however. We must all of us keep up the pressure on our governments to find accommodation and solution. The temptation always is to shirk that task as do so many Canadian newspapers which in their relentless and generally successful pursuit of mediocrity, fail dismally to acquaint Canadians with any but the fringes of what is unquestionably the most dramatic and most challenging issue of this century, perhaps of any century. That issue, in the language of the Brandt Commission, is "survival", human survival.

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My first words this evening were of Frank Scott. The last words are his, for they are words with which we can all associate, and should.

Wrote Scott:

"The world is my country
The human race is my race
The spirit of man is my God
The future of man is my heaven."